

# **SOUTHWEST COORDINATING GROUP (SWCG)**

November 8-9, 2004 Meeting Minutes  
NAFRI, Tucson, AZ

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bill Waterbury (Chair), Bob Lee, Nancy Neskaukas, Jeff Whitney, Bryan Swift, Willie Begay, Kirk Rowdabaugh, Dugger Hughes, Jay Ellington (Ex. Sec)

**MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:** Pam McAlpin

**GUESTS:** Bob, Lineback, Scott Hunt, John Kraske, John Selkirk

The meeting began at 1300, November 8, 2004. Minutes for the August 18-19, 2004 meeting were reviewed and approved with minor changes.

## **SWCG CHAIR TRANSITION**

Bill will transition the Chair position to Pam starting with the January meeting. Bill will also be replaced by Tom Beddow (USFS) as the USFS representative to the SWCG starting with the January meeting. The SWCG discussed its concern with the turnover that will occur during 2005 as Nancy and Bryan will be retiring, potential job changes, and transition of the USFS position.

**Decision:** Pam will become Chair for 2005 and 2006. Willie will become the Vice-Chair for the same time period. SWCG will not establish a rotation list, but rather will adhere to a policy of rotating the chair such that each agency has an opportunity to serve as chair. For historical purposes, Jay will post all past SWFMB/SWCG Chairs on the SWCG website.

## **TYPE 2 TEAM DISCUSSION**

A general discussion was held on Type 2 teams including management of the teams, declining enrollments, recruiting, trainees, relationship of Type 2 teams with SWCG/MAC, commitment of T1 & T2 members, and filling holes on a team during the initial period of a fire.

**Decision:** Teams will carry a maximum of 60 positions for incidents within the SWA, including primary and non-primary positions. On out-of-area assignments, the number of positions will be negotiated. Also, when a Command & General Staff position is filled by an AD, a trainee will be assigned to the position and will fall within the 60 total for the team. SWCG's position on qualifications from incident level T5 through T1 is potential candidates who aspire to work on a Type 1 team must follow a logical progression. That is, each person must be qualified at the previous level prior to moving to the next level. For example, an IC must have been qualified as a Type 3 before becoming Type 2, and as a Type 2 before becoming a Type 1. We realize that there will still be a transition period until the present system standards catches up with our up coming personnel so some exceptions may have to be made on a case by case situation to meet the needs of the agencies.

### MANAGEMENT

SWCG re-iterates that it does not manage Type 2 Teams, which includes recruitment, meetings, or assignments. The only exception is when the SWA is in PL-4/5, then SWCG/MAC Group will control assignment within the SWA, and when the National PL is 4/5, then NMAC will control all IMT's nationally.

### ROTATION

Within the SWA, the closest forces concept continues to remain in effect for Type 2 Team assignments. A concern was raised pertaining to teams being on constant call-out. Some teams would like to be off-call, but issues always arise when this occurs, such as missing assignments, etc.

**Decision:** No need to change anything at this time. However, teams can stand down at anytime for rest, recreation, or recuperation, especially after multiple assignments.

### RECRUITMENT/ENROLLMENT

How can SWCG help in getting more involved in recruiting/enrollment with Type 2 teams? A general discussion was held on getting supervisory approval, funding support (i.e. purchase of gear bags, pins, etc), and encouraging Agency Administrators to motivate their personnel to participate and get involved early in the fall of the year. A suggestion was made to tap into the new USFS Finance/HR Center being re-located to Albuquerque, City Fire Departments, and other Federal agencies. Each agency representative on SWCG is reminded to show support for team involvement by contacting Agency Administrations and persuading them to involve their people.

## SUPPORT

Zone Team Boards can always make a proposal to SWCG for team support (i.e. gear bags, etc). Acquisition/Procurement Plans from each team is recommended prior to the fire season.

## INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Teams would like to have satellite phone/hook-up when assigned to incidents in remote areas. SWCG recommended using contract services (i.e. Lyman Brother's, etc). A recommendation was made that Zone CC's need to pre-order a system when a team will be located in a remote area.

**Decision:** Language will be inserted in the SWA Mob Guide stating the need to pre-order communication systems. When requested, SWCC will follow-up and track critical resources for the Type 2 teams.

## **TYPE 1 TEAM SUPPORT**

Type 1 Teams need to submit their procurement/acquisition plans to SWCG at the January meeting. Bill will contact the team IC's.

## **CALL-WHEN-NEEDED T2/T3 TEAM**

Kirk stated there is a proposal by the State of Arizona to develop an AD Type 2/3 CWN Team with All Risk capabilities. The team would primarily be developed as a short-team hired under State authority and be available as a year-round asset. The team would be considered for management purposes using Type 2 guidelines.

**Decision:** No decision required. Issue is in development stages at this time.

## **INMATE CREWS (AZS)**

By the Spring of 2005, AZS will have 12, 20-person inmate crews available for assignment within the State of Arizona. Each crew will have saw capability, and come with their own crew buggies, Type 2 engine, and Forester/Crew Boss. One of the 12 crews will be all female.

## **FIRE PLANNING ANALYSIS (FPA)**

John Selkirk and Bob Lee provided the SWCG with the latest information on FPA and its effect on the Southwest Area. Bob stated the FPA Committee is moving forward working through the process, finalizing a charter, and setting up training arrangements. Direction from the National Office is not always clear, especially when they send info/direction through individual agencies vice sending out as interagency. The first completed FPU map is due to the National Group by December 1, 2004 and each FPU has from January to March to get the process virtually underway. Everyone must realize that the process could be confusing, problems will occur, and mis-information will often pass through the system. FPU's will forward any recommended changes to the process or map boundaries to the FPA Committee. Once the FPU's are established, each FPU will be broken down into Fire Management Units (FMU), which will lead to tremendous number crunching for each FPU. Some holes may be left in the system as some FPU's do not see a need to cover/analyze some real estate, due to no fire occurrence, etc. Southern Colorado grassland units are planning to work with Eastern NM and Western TX units to form on FPU. The FPA Committee plans conference calls with all FPU leads to discuss charters, FMU's, weighting FMU's, contracting work, etc.

**Decision:** The SWCG noted (1) they need to keep people on task and focus (w/FPU's) and by-pass some of the rumor information that filters into the system, (2) work on the big picture and not necessarily be overly concerned about lines on the map, (3) encourage and motivate Agency Administrators to better understand FPA and that this process is long-term, (4) the FPU Committee will be given direction that they are to consider and use state and local resources for initial attack on Federal lands where appropriate agreements and history exist, show these resources as unbudgeted resources, and ensure that at least one FPU in each state (NM&AZ) will include state and local non-federal resources in that manner, (5) some funding will be needed for contract work, (6) monitoring FPU's that may be struggling with the process, and (7) continue pushing the training issue, where at least one person is trained within each FPU.

## **INTERAGENCY FIRE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (IFPM)**

A discussion was held on IFPM and its impact on fire management in the Southwest Area. Fourteen key positions have been identified by the National Offices that will be eventually meet interagency standards. By September 30, 2009, anyone filling any of these positions at the GS-11 or above level must be GS-401

qualified. It was noted that tight deadlines are in place for conversion of selected positions (i.e. GS-462/455/460), complexity analysis for all fire positions are due soon, the difficulty with IFPM will be with the mid-level (GS-7/11) folks in the GS-462 series, and the Human Resources folks must be continuously involved in the process. Meeting the education component for incumbent personnel will be a challenge. The good news is lots of opportunities exist at local colleges and universities, NWCG has approved upper level courses that will qualify folks for the 401 series, and folks can qualify through the Technical Fire Management (TFM) program. The SWCG recognizes that some positions will require ICT3 and RXB2 to be qualified, and the SWCG must be ready to provide direction on getting these folks qualified. This includes providing funds for education and experience for anyone currently holding a position that will be converted.

**Decision:** The SWCG encourages all agencies/units to move forward with completing the Complexity Analysis requirements for each position in fire management, bring Human Resources folks together in one setting to discuss the program sometime during the period March-April, set up a meeting with Agency Administrators to bring them up to speed, and draft a letter from SWCG through each agency requesting they assess future training and education needs for each position identified that will need to convert to the 401 series. Type 3 IC and RXB2 were identified as critical developmental positions, which should be supported by SWCG.

### **FIRE USE TEAMS**

No major issues pertaining to Fire Use Teams were discussed. However, the SWCG did note that they would like to see the SW Fire Use Team build a roster, and to keep it clean and up-to-date. That is, team members should not be listed as a primary member on any other IM Teams at the same time. For 2004, the SW Team did not get many opportunities for mobilization.

**Decision:** Dugger will be going to the National Coordinators meeting to propose that the national WFU Team rotation process be setup and managed much like the T1 IM Teams process.

### **THREE-TIER DISPATCH SYSTEM**

A charter has been drafted and will be presented to the SWCG soon. The committee will be meeting in Albuquerque sometime during the month of February. A short discussion was held on the potential for breaking up a couple of Zones, how FPA will affect 3-Tier, and the need for a proper analysis to be completed with costs and alternatives.

### **GREENNESS MAP**

The USGS is looking at significantly reducing or eliminating funding for AVHRR NDVI-derived greenness mapping activity at the EROS Data Center (EDC). The net effect would be that these maps would no longer be available for fire management use. Chuck Maxwell submitted a draft letter (via Jeff Whitney) indicating the SWCG would like to see continuous support for the greenness mapping program at EDC.

**Decision:** The SWCG signed the letter and returned it to Chuck for forwarding to USGS.

### **PREDICTIVE SERVICES**

Chuck Maxwell submitted (via Jeff Whitney) a draft charter for the creation of an Area Predictive Services Committee. The purpose of the charter is to provide for the coordination, application, and advancement of Wildland Fire Predictive Services in support of safe and cost effective Wildland fire management in the Southwest Area. A few of the specific responsibilities of the committee will be to advise the SWCG and its partners on Area-specific strategies and techniques to reduce the cost and risk of Wildland fire management activities, serve as the primary training cadre for the development and/or instruction of Predictive Services related education courses, interface with NWCG Fire Environment Working Team, provide and coordinate strategic planning for Predictive Services products and services, and coordinate and promote research and development related to Predictive Services.

**Decision:** The SWCG signed the Charter. USFWS will be liaison to the Committee.

### **FEDERAL FIRE POLICY**

Greg Greenhoe, Chair of the Federal Fire Implementation Committee, gave an update to the SWCG on where the Committee stands. According to Greg, the Committee was assigned nine tasks to follow-up on. A few of these tasks include establishment of common terminology and definitions, develop consistent interagency language, revise training for fire/fuels courses, review geographic area and national interagency agreements, develop internal review process for Implementation of the Federal Fire Policy, develop a communication plan, and develop and Annual Operating Plan to be reviewed each year. The Committee has recommended that there be three kinds of Wildland fire: (1) Wildland fire suppression, (2) Prescribed Fire, and (3) Wildland Fire Use.

## MEETING DATES

SW Engine Operators Com.	11/17 – 11/18	Albuquerque, NM
NMAC	11/30 – 11/31	Boise, ID
SW Prevention	11/30 – 12/03	Tucson, AZ
FPU Deadline	12/01	
SW Region FWS (R2) FMO Mtg.	12/06 – 12/10	Tucson, AZ
Nat. Coordinators Mtg.	12/07 – 12/09	Monterey, CA
Nat. BLM Mtg.	12/07 – 12/09	Cheyenne, WY
NMICG	12/08 – 12/09	Albuquerque, NM
NMS FMO Mtg.	01/10 – 01/11	Albuquerque, NM
Inc. Business Mgt PWT	01/18 – 01/21	San Diego, CA
SWCG	01/19 – 01/21	Albuquerque, NM
SW IHC	01/25 – 01/27	Scottsdale, AZ
SW Dispatchers Wkshop	01/25 – 01/28	Ruidoso, NM
NPS Inter. Mtn. FMO Mtg.	01/25 – 01/29	Albuquerque, NM
S-520	01/31 – (2 weeks)	Tucson, AZ
3-Tier Dispatch Comm.	02/15 – 02/16	Albuquerque, NM
Nat. Fire Plan / IFAC	02/16 – 02/17	Albuquerque, NM
FPA Deadline	03/01	
SW T1 IMT Mtg.	03/01 – 03/03	Scottsdale, AZ
NM T2 IMT Mtg.	03/02 – 03/03	Albuquerque, NM
Nat. AC/IC Mtg.	03/07 – 03/11	Tucson, AZ
S-420 (SW)	03/14 – 03/18	Tucson, AZ
AZ Wildfire Acad.	03/20 – 03/25	Prescott, AZ
Western States FMO Mtg.	03/28 – 03/31	Portland, OR

## SOUTHWEST FIRE COUNCIL

The SWCG discussed the purpose and direction of SWFCO. Starting approximately 43 years ago, SWFCO was originally established as a means for bringing together fire management personnel in the southwest to discuss fire management actions, establishing committees, etc. Over time, the group evolved into the Southwest Fire Management Board (SWFMB) and eventually SWCG. However, SWFCO remained, changing its direction and focus from management to information sharing, and really being no part of SWFMB or SWCG. The SWCG discussed that since everything SWFCO was originally doing is now being handled by other groups under SWCG, why continue with SWFCO. SWFCO does not have a charter and lacks formally written objectives.

**Decision:** The SWCG decided SWFCO should continue, but should be led by SWCG. A future SWFCO might be bringing in all Committees, Task Groups, vendors, etc to meet simultaneously with SWCG. However, before anything moves forward, a more detailed discussion on the objectives of SWFCO will be on the agenda for the January meeting. Jeff Whitney will take the lead on SWFCO matters and will draft a letter on behalf of SWCG for agency distribution prior to the meeting.

## TYPE 2 CREW HANDBOOK

Willie Begay led a discussion on the use and management of Type 2 IA crews and its effect on the Type 2 Crew Handbook. The discussion included whether there was a need for more Type 2 IA crews, management of these crews, transportation, costs, and ICT5 qualifications.

**Decision:** The goal of the SWA Type 2 program is have 25% of SWA Type 2 crews qualified as Type 2 IA crews. Willie will draft letter on behalf of SWCG to providing direction to Type 2 Crew Committee.

## **SOUTHWEST COORDINATION CENTER UPDATE**

- Dugger proposed that a new section be inserted in the SW Mob Guide pertaining to "Standard Practices for AD's." This is prompted by the fact that some Zone CC's are heavily involved in hiring AD's while others are not. There's no clear direction on where AD's are hired.  
**Decision:** Dugger will draft wording for SWCG review prior to updating the SW Mob Guide.
- Dugger proposed creating an AD recognition award in the form of a plaque.
- Kudos to BLM-NM for providing funding to host a ROSS Specialist this past season in SWCC.
- Dugger raised the point that Forest Supervisors feel they oversee the Center Manager position. Thus, this often leads to Center Managers not operating within an interagency environment.
- ROSS: Dugger gave a quick review of ROSS and stated that self-status should be implemented prior to the 2005 fire season. The SWCG agreed.  
**Decision:** Dugger will draft a letter for SWCG signature stating that Self-Status will be implemented. Overhead will status self, engine, crews, and dispatch personnel will be statused by their Supervisor, and AD will be statused by the Zone CC.
- IQCS: IQCS is well underway, but a number of issues are surfacing. Dugger suggested each agency provide a person to SWCC that would become a cadre member/coach for IQCS.  
**Decision:** Each agency needs to provide Dugger with a name.
- Type 1 and SW FUM Team nominations are due to SWCC by 12/01/04.
- SWCC staffing is short an Intell Assistant, aircraft dispatcher, and an FBAN.
- A re-organization of USDA Forest Service R03 is causing a reduction in Communication Technicians for 2005.
- Dugger stated a number of changes are being proposed by the Incident Business Practices Working Team for 2005. Proposed changes include new AD rates in pay which correspond to the GS level, AD 1-5 changing to AD A-M, subsistence from per diem back to actual, and training for AD's.

## **AVIATION COMMITTEE**

The Aviation Committee has been reconstituted and has held an organization conference call. Cliff Chetwin, NPS Intermountain Region, is the new Chair. The Committee has raised a number of questions for the SWCG including who will be the Groups liaison to the committee, expectations of the committee, desires of SWCG pertaining to the 2004 Aviation Review, input into NMAC helicopter resource placement for 2005, and development of standards for piston SEAT's and altitude limits.

**Decision:** SWCG liaison is Bryan Swift, NPS. Bryan will respond to Committee on behalf of SWCG

The next meeting of the Southwest Coordinating Group was scheduled for January 19-21, 2005 in Albuquerque, NM, starting at 1300.

The meeting adjourned at 1600, November 9, 2004.

/s/ Bill Waterbury

Chair

Southwest Coordinating Group

je (12/14/04)